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ABSTRACT

In this lesson plan, each student must decide which political party he/she will join or whether to register as an independent. Each student will be part of a group analyzing one current political party and presenting to the class this party's solutions for the problems confronting the United States today. The political parties for analysis are: Democratic; Republican; Green; Libertarian; Natural Law; Reform; and Socialist. Students are provided with detailed instructions, online resources, and reflection questions. The teacher's notes describe the unit's purpose, explain the application of history/social science standards, and suggest teaching strategies. (BT)

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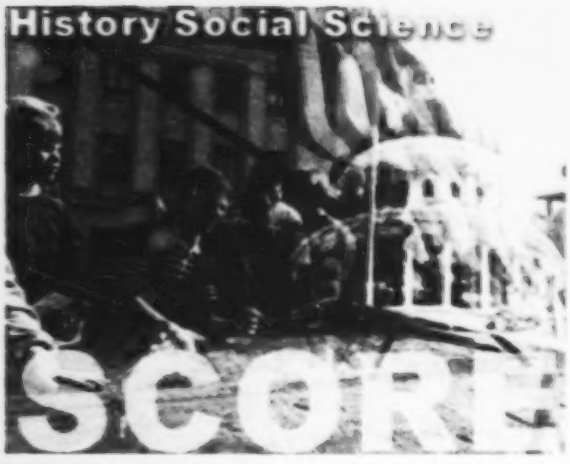

Schools of California Online Resources for Education (SCORE): Connecting California's Classrooms to the World

IN PRAISE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

12th Grade Lesson by Kris Hizal

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http://score.rims.k12.ca.us/activity/parties/index.html

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Margaret Hill

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In Praise of Political Parties

Election Day is coming up in June and you and your classmates in the senior government class have a chance to register to vote for the very first time. Everyone must decide which political party they will join or if they will register as an independent. You are part of a group who will be analyzing one current political party and making a presentation to the class about this party¼s solutions for the problems that confront the U.S. today. Since your role as „party analyst¾ is so important to your classmates, you will strive to ensure that all information presented is current and accurate.

THE TASK

Select one of the following political parties:

- Democratic
- Green
- Libertarian
- Natural Law
- Reform
- Republican
- Socialist

Prepare the following for your in-class report and presentation. All starred (*) items must also be presented orally.

Part 1

1. Write a brief (200-250 words) historical background on the party.
2. In a paragraph (75 word minimum), describe in general terms what your party¼s philosophy is regarding the role of government in American life.
3. Choose two major issues (except immigration and military spending) and describe your party¼s position. Be sure to explain how your party justifies its position.

Part 2

Create a "response map." You will need a 36 inch wide by 30 inch long piece of butcher paper. You will divide the paper into six sections. Make up an original title for your "response map" which includes the name of your political party. Include the following items in your "response map" so it can be used as a guide in your oral presentation to your classmates.

Section 1
Find and copy out a current campaign slogan used by your political party.*

Section 2
Create a song or rap with at least 20 different lines which reflects your political party's point of view.*

Section 3
Draw the mascot/logo for your political party. Include a brief description of how the mascot/logo represents the party. If a mascot/logo doesn¼t exist, create one and explain how it represents the party.

Section 4
Find a photo of, draw or trace a famous person from your party (1950-present) and include a significant quote from that person.

Section 5
Create an original political cartoon which reflects your party's position on immigration.

Section 6
Create an original political cartoon which reflects your party's position on military spending.

THE PROCESS

- Divide the work up evenly with at least two people working on each assignment.
- Research the views of the political party through the Internet, studying the voter¼s pamphlet, reading magazines and watching or listening to interviews on radio and TV.

- Proofread all work carefully.
- Make your „response map¾ colorful and pleasing to the eye.
- Practice your presentation several times before it is your turn to present.

RESOURCES

There are numerous resources on the Internet which relate to Political Parties. These sites are by the parties themselves.

Official Site of the Democratic Party
http://www.democrats.org/index.html

Official Site of the Libertarian Party
http://www.lp.org/lp/

Official Site of the Natural Law Party
http://home.natural-law.org/nlp/

Principles of Reform
http://www.reformparty.org/

Socialist Party USA
http://www.socialist.org/base.html

Green Parties of North America
http://www.rahul.net/greens/

If you do a search through one of the search engines like Yahoo or Magellan, you will find other sites about these political groups. These are usually designed to provide negative information about the party that would not be included on the official site.

Some other resources might include magazines such as Time, U.S. News and World Report, the Economist, and Newsweek. Some of these have online sites with up-to-the-minute information as well as archives:

U.S. News and World Report Online
http://www.usnews.com/usnews/main.htm

Time Magazine
http://pathfinder.com/time/

Newspapers with valuable information include the New York Times, Christian Science Monitor, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times and a full range of local press. Look for these resources online as

well, for example:

Christian Science Monitor Electronic Edition
http://www.csmonitor.com/

The League of Women Voters publishes voter information material with a discussion of significant issues before each election.

LEARNING ADVICE

The key to success for this activity is for you to present your Political Party in a genuine way. The rest of the class must think that you firmly believe what you are saying. No matter how strange a position may seem to you, try and understand it and present it as if you believed it all of your life.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of this activity will be based on: the quality and accuracy of your research, visual presentation of your Response Map, and your preparedness during your presentation.

CONCLUSION

After all the presentations discuss the merits and limitations of each party's perspective with your classmates.

- What are the fundamental assumptions of each party?
- Which parties are naturally against each other because their fundamental beliefs clash?
- Which parties are most likely to agree on some issues?

Here are the Voter Registration Cards. It is up to you to decide which Political Party, if any, you want to join. Good Luck.

REFLECTION

Looking back over the process that you used to complete this activity, are there any changes that you would make to improve the overall quality of your presentation? Your input is also needed in regards to the quality of the Web site which you were assigned. Please complete the following form.

Web Site Description and Evaluation

Reviewer's Name _____

Web Site Name _____

Web Site URL _____

Describe how the site either positively or negatively impacted your research during this project.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please evaluate the site you used by circling the most appropriate word.
Awesome Good OK Poor Awful

Did you find a better site for this project? If so, list it below.
(If I agree, you will receive extra credit)

Web Site Name _____

Web Site URL _____

TEACHER NOTES

Grade Level and Unit:

Grade 12 Unit 6

H/SS Content Standards:

12.6 Students evaluate issues regarding campaigns for national, state, and local elective office, in terms of:

1.the origin, development, and role of political parties noting those occasional periods in which there was only one major party or were more than two major parties

3.the role of polls, campaign advertising and the controversies over campaign funding

4.the means that citizens use to participate in the political process (e.g., voting, campaigning, lobbying, filing a legal challenge, demonstrating, petitioning, picketing, running for political office)

Historical and Social Science Analysis Skills Grades 9-12

Historical Research, Evidence and Point of View

3.students evaluate major debates among historians concerning alternative interpretations of the past, including an analysis of authors' use of evidence and the distinctions between sound generalizations and misleading oversimplifications

4.students construct and test hypotheses; collect, evaluate and employ information from multiple primary and secondary sources; and apply it in oral and written presentations

The **main objectives** of this project are:

1. To expose students to as many political parties as possible.
2. To encourage students to register to vote.
3. To increase student participation in our democratic process.
4. To demonstrate the link between an underlying philosophy about the role of government and the nature of people and the positions that political groups hold.

In order to meet these objectives, all the political parties must be researched and presented. The teacher should facilitate the final discussion so that the students do a thorough job of analyzing the relationship between the party positions and their world views, and where they agree and disagree.

A clever teacher will use this lesson to engender student interest in analyzing political events throughout the rest of the school year, asking the students which parties would support certain government actions or policy decisions and why.

The **expected length** of this unit is approximately 5 days for preparation and 2 days for presentations.

The **materials** needed for this project are Internet access, as well as, current newspapers, magazines, and literature from the various political parties.

Special needs students should experience success during this unit due to the wide variety of assignments each group must complete.

Teachers of this unit should be sure to research all of the web sites listed under Campaigns and the Political Process in order to gain the necessary **background information**.

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